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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4481
RUCOWCV/CCGDSEVEN MIAMI FL PRIORITY
INFO RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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RUCOWCV/COMCOGARD SECTOR KEY WEST FL PRIORITY
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RHEFHLC/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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RHMFISS/FBI WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAHLA/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L HAVANA 000351

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TAGS: [SNAR](#) [PREL](#) [SMIG](#) [PGOV](#) [CU](#) [ASEC](#)
SUBJECT: CUBAN MINREX SOUNDS OFF - AGAIN

REF: HAVANA 341

Classified By: COM JONATHAN FARRAR FOR REASONS 1.4(B) & (D)

11. (C//NF) Summary: On 11 June 2009, U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Drug Interdiction Specialist (DIS) assigned to the United States Interests Section (USINT) in Havana, Cuba, attended a repatriation of 14 Cuban migrants at Bahia de Cabanas. During the transit to the migrant receiving pier, DIS engaged in a candid conversation with a Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MINREX) official who, like his counterpart in recent weeks, gave some possible insight into the possible Government of Cuba (GOC) approach to the upcoming migration talks. However, unlike his counterpart, this MINREX official spoke solely to one recent issue involving 2 Cuban Border Guard (CBG) recruits who commandeered a go-fast (gf) vessel from a Cuban Border Guard base in Pinar del Rio province on 31 May, in an apparent attempt to flee the island. End Summary.

12. (C//NF) MINREX official Eduardo Martinez Borbonet (Borbonet), an officer in the Ministry's North American Division, and who attends repatriations somewhat infrequently (DIS has had contact with this official on only 2 occasions-USINT consular officers have also met this officer on other occasions while attending repatriations), exchanged pleasantries with the DIS at the outset of the repatriation. During the boat ride to the receiving pier, Borbonet almost immediately asked about the status of 2 CBG recruits who commandeered a gf from a CBG base in Pinar del Rio province in May. Case Background: Acting on information provided to the DIS from the CBG command center in Havana, and forwarded to USCG District 7 in Miami, the USCG was able to locate the recruits in good condition- the case was treated as a search-and-rescue case after a CBG Colonel informed the DIS that neither of the 2 onboard had seamanship or navigation skills.

13. (C//NF) The 2 recruits were eventually located by the USCG in their broken-down gf approximately fifty nautical miles northwest of Cuba. Both were brought onboard a USCG

cutter after they responded in the affirmative when they were asked by the cutter crew if they wanted to be taken off their vessel; both recruits were transferred to a Cuban migrant holding platform (USCG cutter) and treated and processed per current migrant processing procedures. Ultimately, it was decided that both recruits should be forwarded to the migrant processing facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The commandeered gf, weapon, and global positioning satellite unit used by the recruits have since been returned to Cuban authorities by the USCG.

¶4. (C//NF) In response to his question, DIS advised Borbonet that the 2 recruits will be forwarded to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. DIS further advised Borbonet that the decision had been made per standing Cuban migrant processing procedures.

¶5. (C//NF) Borbonet, like his co-worker Armando Bencomo (see reference A), stated "in my own personal opinion," he would imagine the forwarding of the 2 recruits to Guantanamo may cause/present a problem. He elaborated and spoke to the idea that this seems like a political decision on the part of the United States, made to keep the Cuban American population in Miami happy (DIS has heard Borbonet refer to Cuban Americans in Miami as "the mafia" on more than one occasion).

Borbonet stated that this may be an issue, again, in his own opinion, considering the timing of the decision to send the recruits to Guantanamo with the recently-agreed to migration talks to be held between both nations in the coming weeks. When asked what in his mind should happen to the two, Borbonet's primary complaint/argument was that the two recruits are hijackers, and should be considered as such by the USG; in his mind their actions constituted a hijacking scenario, not one pertaining to human rights, and they should be returned to Cuba.

¶6. (C//NF) Comment: DIS judges the contents of Borbonet's words as the predictable GOC response to the US decision to transfer both recruits to Guantanamo. DIS further believes that he was speaking on behalf of the GOC. The GOC's knowledge that the USG would more than likely send both recruits to Guantanamo Bay provides the GOC with just the right fodder to give themselves what they may believe is leverage and media exposure/propaganda over the USG entering said talks. Ultimately, however, DIS judges this maneuver to be deliberate on the part of the GOC, whose leadership has stated its willingness to discuss any topic with the USG, but which is trying to create conditions that give it greater control over the proceedings. End Comment.
FARRAR